

FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

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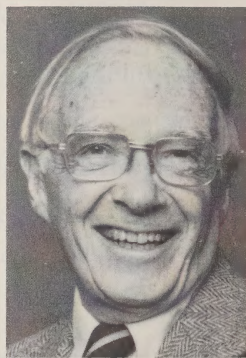
February 1990



Since 1949 the purpose of Fellowship in Prayer is to promote the practice of prayer among all religious faiths whose fundamental belief is in God regardless of race, creed, or color, and whose tenets include the universal attributes of truth, honesty, justice, and mercy, that thereby there may arise a closer relation to Almighty God and a deeper spirit of fellowship among mankind.

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When was the last time you fell in love? Whatever your answer, now is the time to fall in love again, says Daniel Martin, Co-Director of the Wainwright House Institute on Global Issues, religious adviser to the United Nations Environment Programme, and adviser to Fellowship in Prayer's Worldwide Day of Prayer and Meditation to Help Heal Mother Earth. "We have to fall in love with the earth," says Father Martin, a Roman Catholic missionary priest. "When you fall in love your ethical structure changes and you act differently, not because of an act of will, but because you see things in a new light." Religion, says Father Martin in a major story in *U.S. News and World Report*, can help people cherish the earth again by resurrecting rituals that celebrate nature.



For religion to embrace environmentalism in a meaningful way, the Reverend Martin believes, it must find a way to resanctify nature—to view the creation as holy in itself, not simply as a stage for human action.

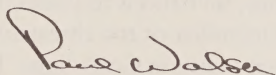
To view the creation as holy in itself; that, of course, is the very heart of FIP's Worldwide Day of Prayer and Meditation. It is our hope that you and your family and friends will arise at dawn on the morning of the autumn equinox—Sunday, September 23, 1990—and spend the next hour in prayer and meditation on the Divine nature of all of God's creation and the spiritual obligation each of us has to respect, revere, and protect every manifestation of His creativity.

Fortunately, the understanding that human survival is at stake and that ecology is very much a spiritual matter is growing day by day. The *U.S. News and World Report* story describes "a growing legion of clergy preaching environmental protection from the pulpits of America's churches and synagogues." Last October, the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York City devoted its annual High Holy Day Message to the environment. A full page ad in the *New York Times*, with the heading "What Are We Doing?" quotes Leviticus 25:23: "... the land is Mine. You are my tenants." The American Baptist Church and the United Methodist Church have issued policy statements urging the faithful to pursue ecologically sound life styles. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

is developing a similar statement, and the Vatican's World Day of Peace message on January 1 of this year focused on our spiritual obligation to protect the earth.

This renewal of our original understanding that the Divine is in all things ("He is all and in all" Col. 3:11) need not take place only in churches or synagogues, however. As the *U.S. News and World Report* story pointed out, "Many of us feel the divine most keenly in a natural setting. Clark Kellog of New York's Riverside Church says that the closest he has ever come to God was while sitting in a warm spot high in the Sierra Nevadas. 'I realized that everything was wonderful—alive and connected—and I was part of it,' he says. He is now drafting a declaration that would dedicate his church to environmental action."

Ultimately, however, it is up to each one of us, as individuals, to open our hearts and "fall in love with the earth again." Through prayer and meditation we can allow our spiritual imagination and emotions to celebrate a joyful reunion with the presence of the Divine in the world around us. Only in this way will we be sufficiently aroused to help save our earthly home before it is too late. That is what Worldwide Day of Prayer and Meditation to Help Heal Mother Earth is all about.



Paul Walsh
President

A *FiP* reader recently told me a deeply meaningful story about her grandfather's ocean crossing from Holland to America almost 100 years ago. Like most American immigrants, he could only afford to travel steerage class, which meant spending several long weeks in dark and dreary quarters. After two days at sea, when he was already feeling ill, a friend who was traveling first class asked him to come up to his stateroom for a visit. There he saw red velvet sofas, shiny mahogany tables and crystal chandeliers that made a sharp contrast with his own dim quarters below. Out on the deck people lying in the sun under a bright blue sky looked happier and healthier than the people down below.

The two men talked for awhile and then the well-to-do friend invited the other to share his spacious quarters for the rest of the trip. Unfortunately, however, the steerage passenger declined this generous offer and returned to the lower deck where he spent a very uncomfortable crossing, depressed and sick.

As I listened to this true story, I could not help but compare it to the journey of the human spirit in time. Each of us has many experiences like this, invitations to places that seem too far above us or beyond us or too unfamiliar or too threatening to accept, but which are really opportunities to live in God's light. These opportunities often come in the form of a surprise, one of the most powerful ways in which God's Spirit breaks into a life, interrupting the usual sequence of events to offer a chance for newness and novelty. Here in our reader's story was one of those unexpected moments, an occasion to say "yes" or "no" to God's will for human happiness, a chance to enjoy the pleasantness of friendship and the beauty of the world. But pride overcame humility. Fate won a battle over freedom and dispelled the light.

Decisions like this one are minor tragedies. It would have taken only a few steps upward on the ladder of humility, a small act of surrender to God's inflowing love, to have won a few weeks in the sun. Grace—"the most powerful force in the world"—was available, as it always is, to make the right decision possible.

It is certain beyond any shadow of doubt that God wants women and men to live in the sunlight of the Divine presence, to have a sense of hope and to feel alive. Even in times of pain or illness or loneliness or

grief when God seems very far away, God is with us. It can be no other way. As C. G. Jung, the noted founder of analytic psychology, carved into the lintel over his door, "called or uncalled, God is always present." We can recognize and experience "the Light that shines in the darkness" or we can ignore it and succumb to misery and despair. The battle of light and darkness is waged within, and it is a matter of our own choice as to which side wins. For we are strong enough and free enough to appropriate the greater-than-human power of grace that we need in order to stay in the light.

Mary Ford-Grabowsky
Editor

The mother's battle for her child—with sickness, with poverty, with war, with all the forces of exploitation and callousness that cheapen human life—needs to become a human battle, waged in love and in the passion for survival.

Adrienne Rich

So, waiting, I have won from you the end:
God's presence in each element.

Goethe

Out of the ancient wisdom of the past,
out of great and ancient wisdom,
come the words,
"I am that infinite, eternal silence.
Thou art that infinite, eternal silence.
All this is that infinite, eternal silence.
Nothing exists but this infinite, eternal silence."

Stephen Schwartz

The Lord is my light and my salvation;
whom shall I fear?
The Lord is the stronghold of my life;
of whom shall I be afraid?

Psalms 27

I have so many things to do today that I shall spend the first three hours in prayer.

Martin Luther

Truth is God. Truth is what the inner voice tells you. The vows of Truth, Purity, Non-violence, Poverty, and Non-possession have to be kept; and then the voice within can be followed.

Gandhi

When we follow the path of the good and the beautiful, we get the help we need from the creative power. In yielding our self-defenses, we are defended; in relinquishing our wants, we have all that we need; in limiting ourselves, the creative power is aroused to do the work.

Carol Anthony

The "Council of All Beings"

JOANNA MACY

In September of this year, FiP will sponsor a Worldwide Day of Prayer and Meditation to Help Heal Mother Earth. No one is better qualified than Joanna Macy to speak out on the desperate plight of the life forms dying all over our planet from toxic waste, pesticides and pollution of all kinds. Here she describes a liturgy in which God's wounded creatures speak about their suffering and implore men and women to restore the earth to its divine wholeness before it is too late. The ritual has been enacted in the USA, Canada, and Europe since 1985.

Listen, humans, this is our world. For hundreds of millions of years we have been evolving our ways, rich in our own wisdom. Now, our days are coming to a close because of what you are doing. It is time for you to hear us.

I am lichen. I turn rock into soil. I've worked as the glaciers retreated, as other life forms came and went. I thought nothing could stop me . . . until now. Now I am being poisoned by acid rain.

Your pesticides are in me now. The eggshells are so fragile they break under my weight, break before my young are ready to hatch.

Listen, human, I am raccoon, I speak for the raccoon people. See my hand? It is like yours. On the soft ground you see its imprint, know I've been there. What marks on this world are you leaving behind you?

The people seated in a circle are speaking extemporaneously. Stepping aside from their identification as humans, they are letting themselves be spokespersons for other life forms. They are meeting in the Council of All Beings.

This simple ritual form in which these people meet first took place when I was in Australia in 1985 and in the intervening years has spread to the United States, Canada, and Europe. In response to the accelerating ecological disasters of our time, it gives form to both anguish and hope. Simultaneously solemn and playful, it allows us to honor our pain for the world and our interconnectedness with all life—a sacred interconnectedness that steadies the heart and empowers subsequent actions in defense of Earth.

This ritual will appear in expanded length in Joanna Macy's new book, Thinking Like a Mountain: Toward a Council of All Beings (written with John Seed, Pat Fleming, and Anne Naess), New Society Publishers.

The Council of All Beings has been held in a wide variety of settings indoors and out, from the Grand Canyon to a college student lounge, from a grove of towering redwoods to a midwestern police armory, from a school gymnasium to a church sanctuary. With Matthew Fox, we have incorporated it into the celebration of the Mass as part of the Liturgy of the Word. Numbers of participants have ranged from a dozen to more than a hundred and included people of all ages. Intergenerational Councils are particularly rewarding.

We begin by allowing ourselves to be chosen by another life form, on whose behalf we will speak in the Council of All Beings. Countless are the species who co-exist with us in the web of life, deeply affected by current developments, yet without a voice in the deliberations of humankind. When meeting outdoors in nature, people can go off alone to find the identity they will assume; when indoors, some moments of silence suffice as people relax, sometimes lying down, to wait with open, non-discursive mind the presence of another life form. It is wise to stay with the first impulse that arises, for it is not a question of choosing a species one knows a lot about, but rather allowing oneself to be surprised—whether by plant or animal or ecological feature such as a mountain, swamp, or a body of water.

We take time to see this life form in our mind's eye, carefully and from every angle, and to enter it, imaginatively sensing its body from within, and to ask its permission to speak for it in the Council.

When time permits and supplies are at hand, we make simple masks or breastplates to portray our adopted identity. We do this in companionable silence to sounds of nature, actual or taped. Also when time permits, we cluster in small groups of three or four to practice speaking for our life form, putting into human speech how it feels to be hawk or river, otter or willow. This helps stretch and sharpen our imaginative awareness, further dislodging us from the usual human roles we play.

Now the creatures gather in a circle and the Council of All Beings formally commences. Prayers and invocations help create a sacred space. Native American elements, such as smudging with sage or cedar and calling on the Four Directions, are appropriate. After each corner to the Council identifies himself or herself in turn ("Wolf is here, I speak for all wolves." "The Nile is here, I speak for all rivers."), the ritual leader opens the proceedings. "We meet in Council because our planet is in trouble. It is fitting now, and it is important, that each of us be heard. For there

here of the earth
 cosmic morning & GLOBAL WARMING
 they will in heaven
 on earth as he done
 cosmic morning & GLOBAL WARMING
 and the
 the soul

KENT I. GROFF 1989

is much now which needs to be said and much that needs to be heard.” He or she invites the beings to speak spontaneously, and they do. There is much that wolf and Nile, hawk and lichen, have to say.

Soon it is evident that humans should be present to hear and they are invited to come into the center of the circle to listen in silence. This means that participants in the ritual, five or six at a time, put aside their masks and move into the center to sit back to back facing outwards; and the Council continues with the manifold life forms addressing the humans—and the humans, for once, being quiet. Periodically, say every ten minutes or so, the ritual leader beats a drum to signal that the humans can return to take up their adopted identities in the wider circle and others replace them in the center. This enables everyone to participate both as human and nonhuman.

The testimony of the beings is often almost overwhelming; with ever-surprising poignancy and eloquence they report how rapidly and radically humans are affecting their lives and their chances of survival. In every Council there comes a shift when complaint and accusation give way; a turning occurs, a recognition of solidarity. Realizing that the fate of the earth depends now on human decisions, the beings in the Council rally to find ways to strengthen humans. The ritual leader can cue this shift:

“Many humans know now that their ways are destroying the earth. They feel overwhelmed by what they have unleashed. Yet our fate is in their hands. O fellow-beings, what powers of ours can we share with them, what strengths of ours can we give?”

No other announcement is usually necessary for the beings in the Council to respond spontaneously.

I, lichen, work slowly, very slowly. Time is my friend. This is what I give you: patience for the long haul and perseverance.

By offering them, naming them, the participants in the ritual invoke the powers within themselves that they want strengthened. The powers are available to us all because they in here in the web of life and because, in the final analysis, that web is what we are. We draw upon them now in this time of great peril and great promise.

It is a dark time. As deep-diving trout I offer you my fearlessness of the dark.

I, lion, give you my roar, the voice to speak and be heard.

I am caterpillar. The leaves I eat taste bitter now. But dimly I sense a great change coming. What I offer you, humans, is my willingness to dissolve and transform. I do that without knowing what the end-result will be. So I share with you my courage too.

GALA DINNER TO MARK FIP'S 40TH ANNIVERSARY

On June 5, 1990, Fellowship in Prayer will celebrate forty years of working "For a World United in Prayer" with a gala dinner at the Nassau Club in Princeton, New Jersey. Be sure to save the date—June 5, 1990—on your calendar.

RESERVATION DEADLINE: May 1, 1990 *COST PER PERSON:* \$25.00

(name)

(address)

(city, state and zip)

Number in my party _____ I enclose \$ _____

MAIL TO: Fellowship in Prayer, 291 Witherspoon Street, Princeton, NJ 08542, (609) 924-6863

I Speak For Grasshopper . . .

This lyrical lament for dying creation illustrates Joanna Macy's "Council of All Beings." As you read it, please understand that "mists" refer to the lethal pesticides infecting and destroying life all over the world.

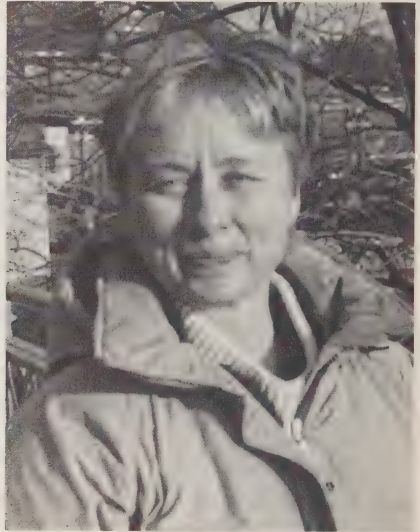
Balanced on a slender blade,
My fragile body moves
as part of the thicket of
grasses, whispering songs
to the wind.

Many have come before me
poised ready for flight

Many will not return as
mists spraying catch
them, legs unbending . . .

O Grasshopper — leap high!

Jane Huggins



Dr. Jane Huggins is a toxicologist and poet who devotes much of her time to the work of Fellowship in Prayer.

The Cry of the Silent Heart

TESSA BIELECKI

There are many schemas for outlining spiritual growth. St. Teresa of Avila speaks of seven mansions in an Interior Castle. St. John of the Cross writes about the Dark Nights of Sense and Spirit. St. Benedict teaches twelve stages up the ladder of humility. Ruth Burrows, a contemporary English Carmelite, writes about crossing the bridge between three islands. Classical ascetical-mystical theology emphasizes the Three Ways: Purgation, Illumination, and Union.

Another viable framework revolves around the prayer "Oh God." This cry of the heart grows out of silence and returns to silence. It can be uttered throughout all phases of the spiritual life but expresses itself quite differently at each stage of growth.

I Think I Know You

In the first stage, we deliberately choose to pray "Oh God." The word God is a concept and a vehicle taking us to the experience of God.

The concept and the experience are "full" in a sense—but imperfectly: full of ego, projections, compulsions and fixations, habitual patterns of thinking, perceiving, behaving. Therefore both the concept and the experience are limited: conditioned, comfortable, "secure." We feel good. We've got the answers! We know who—or what—God is. Or so we think!

I Don't Know You

The second stage is one of purification called ego-annihilation, purgation, metanoia or conversion, St. John's "Dark Night."

Mother Tessa Bielecki is Co-foundress and Abbess of the Spiritual Life Institute, a contemplative order of men and women with communities in the mountain-desert of Colorado and the Nova Scotia woods. Retreatants are welcome to come to either location for brief or extended stays in order to share in the life of the monks and deepen their own spirituality. They stay in private hermitages, participate in many kinds of prayer, meditation, and liturgies according to individual needs and desires. If you would like to arrange a visit or to order publications like Desert Call, the Colorado community's Newsletter, write to Nada Hermitage, Box 119, Crestone, CO 81131.

In reality there is not one dark night but many. In one sense, the dark night is a never-ending process. But in another sense it is a circumscribed period that has a beginning and something of an end.

We cry out, we pray “Oh God”—and what happens? Nothing! We choke on the words. They repel us. Why? Because they don’t mean anything anymore. They’re empty. We don’t know who or what God is anymore. We no longer have any answers. And we don’t feel very good.

This begins to happen in small, seemingly inconsequential, undramatic ways. Then it escalates—very painfully. Depending on our depth, courage, passion, commitment, and our vocation from God, we either move wholeheartedly into the pain of the purification—or we bail out. In most cases we can opt out and escape this process of purgation. Most people do—to avoid the pain.

If we decide to surrender, it becomes initially terrifying—and ultimately liberating. Terrifying and liberating because eventually everything becomes empty. The emptiness of this phase is nothingness and void: no meaning, no value, no beauty, no security, no love, no religion, no spirituality, no self, NO GOD! (“No God” is not a theological or metaphysical reality but an existential psychological experience.)

This is clearly a time when we need spiritual guidance because the nothingness (“nada”) is dangerous and desperate. Unfortunately the nothingness is so great that spiritual guidance isn’t much help. Nothing helps. Nothing works. All there is is nothing.

This is not a time to quit our job, get a divorce, move to another area, or change our religious tradition. A new spouse, job, location, or tradition will not be any better now. This is a time to stay right where we are and immerse ourselves in the demands of ordinary daily life.

I Know You Now

Eventually we move into the third stage. We pray, “O God” again, but this time the experience is totally different. We don’t deliberately will to say the words, but the prayer arises in us.

The prayer to God, the reality meant by the word God, and our experience of God move from emptiness as nothingness to emptiness as fullness: spaciousness, vastness, egolessness, spontaneity, freedom. We experience no conditioning, no projection, no limitation, no compulsion, fixation, or habituation.



Mother Tessa

There is security, but it can only be called the security of “holy insecurity,” the permanence of impermanence, peace in darkness, stability through constant change and flux.

We know God again. But not like the first phase when we had him all neatly fixed into our neat, tight categories—“frisked, spayed, and tamed,” as William McNamara, O.C.D. writes in *The Human Adventure*.



A Hermitage at the Spiritual Life Institute

Now we know God as limitless, uncontainable, unknown in the sense of more and more and “ever new.” So McNamara speaks of “the untamed God,” the wildness of God, the freedom of God.

“I Love You”

There is a second part to the prayer our hearts cry out through the various stages of our spiritual growth: “I love you.”

In the first phase our love of God is limited. There is “dirty duality” because we “have” God: objectified, packaged, locked into our own pockets.

In the second phase we don’t say “Oh God, I love you” and cannot say it even if we try. We’re fortunate if we can say it to our spouse or friend when we feel so “gagged.”

In the third phase we may indeed say it again and usually do most lavishly! But now this prayer arises out of a whole new place which isn’t at all spatial. Ultimately at this stage there is no need to say it because in a sense there’s no self loving God and no God loving me but only the “isness” of loving.

For the Christian, what the Buddhists call *sunyata* is really love: love purified of all its romantic, possessive, limited connotations; love understood as the very essence of God: unbounded openness, “ever ancient and ever new,” as St. Augustine said.

These lovely prayers were written by a contemplative priest after meditating on the Biblical passages cited in his titles. He submitted also the prayer of Kierkegaard which follows his own.

Prayer After Reading Luke 15:11-31 (Parable of the Lost Son)

Father in Heaven,
send forth your Spirit of Reconciliation upon us.
Bring us back to your family as the prodigal father welcomed back his
profligate son.

We admit our sinfulness.
We have not loved as you have taught us.
We have not accepted our brothers and sisters as you accept us.
We need your healing if we are to be ministers of your healing.

We cry out to you, "Lord, have mercy!"

AMEN!

James W. Thornton

*Prayer After Reading Luke 22:41-44; Ephesians 3:14-15
(Jesus' Prayer to Fulfill God's Will)*

Father, help me to know you as father.

Rid me of the anger and confusion that tear me apart.

Help me to make sense out of the senseless.

Give me the insight your Son had in the Garden of Gethsemane: he
neither lost faith in you nor gave in to useless anger.

Come to me with your gift of healing that I may know you and so love
you and live the life you alone offer.

James Thornton, a member of the Congregation of Holy Cross, is this year celebrating 25 years of service in the priesthood. Until recently he was President of De Paul Treatment Centers in Portland, OR, which cares for men, women and children afflicted with addictive disorders and unable to pay for treatment.

Maranatha!

AMEN!

James W. Thornton

Prayer After Reading John 11:1-44 (The Raising of Lazarus)

Father,

Open our hearts and minds.

Fill us with the love and compassion of your Son.

Give us the courage to roll back the stones of our own fear and
ignorance and so liberate those we have entombed—shut away—
by our pride, our self-righteousness, our unreasoning fear.

Send your Spirit of Healing upon us that we may become ministers of
your Healing Grace.

We make our prayer in the name of Him who called Lazarus to a new
life, Jesus, who is Lord forever.

AMEN!

James W. Thornton

Thou Who Hast First Loved Us

Thou who hast first loved us, O God, alas! We speak of it in terms of history as if Thou hast only loved us first but a single time, rather than that without ceasing Thou hast loved us first many times and everyday and our whole life through. When we wake up in the morning and turn our soul toward Thee—Thou art the first—Thou hast loved us first; if I rise at dawn and at the same second turn my soul toward Thee in prayer, Thou art there ahead of me, Thou hast loved me first. When I withdraw from the distractions of the day and turn my soul in thought toward Thee, Thou art the first and thus forever. And yet we always speak ungratefully as if Thou hast loved us first only once.

Soren Kierkegaard

Shrinks 'n' Saints

BY SANDY HULLAKER



RECENTLY, A FRIEND, SPEAKING OF HER TROUBLED SON, SAID TO ME: "HIS FATHER THINKS HE NEEDS RELIGION, BUT I THINK HE NEEDS A PSYCHOLOGIST". THERE SEEMS TO BE AN ALL-ONE OR ALL-THE-OTHER ATTITUDE FOR MANY PEOPLE. PSYCHIATRIST SCOTT PECK (AUTHOR OF THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED) NOTES THAT MANY THERAPISTS VIEW RELIGION AS **'THE ENEMY'** BECAUSE THEY HAVE SEEN SO MANY PEOPLE WHO ARE CRIPPLED BY GUILT (I DESERVE PUNISHMENT) OR HAVE HAD A DISTORTED RELIGION USED AGAINST THEM BY THEIR FAMILIES. ON THE OTHER HAND, HOW MANY PEOPLE HAVE YOU HEARD SAY **'ALL SHRINKS ARE CRAZY THEMSELVES—I'D NEVER SEE ONE'**?

BUT, THE AMAZING SUCCESS OF **12-STEP PROGRAMS** (AA, ACOA, OA...) IN USING RELIGION **AND** PSYCHOLOGY CONTINUES TO RISE AMID SINKING CHURCH MEMBERSHIP AND THOSE PEOPLE WE ALL KNOW WHO HAVE BEEN IN THERAPY FOR YEARS WITHOUT MUCH CHANGE.

MANY SHRINKS DON'T SEEM TO MOVE TO THE HEALING POWER OF LOVE AND FORGIVENESS AFTER DISCOVERING **WHO DONE WHO WRONG**. AT THE SAME TIME, MANY RELIGIOUS CAN ONLY OFFER A VERY SHALLOW AND MEANINGLESS FORGIVENESS IF THE PSYCHOLOGICAL DYNAMICS REMAIN UNCONSCIOUS AND THE PAIN OF THE WRONGDOING IS NOT **FELT** AND **USED** (CALM CONFRONTATION?)

SO MAYBE EVEN SAINTS NEED SHRINKS TO CLEAR UP **WHOM** TO FORGIVE FOR **WHAT**. AND SHRINKS MAY NEED SAINTS TO FIND OUT **HOW**.

Ask Angela

BARBARA ACKERMAN



Brooks Walsh

Dear Friends,

Thank you for all your kind and generous responses to my parables. It pleases me to think of *FiP* readers all over the world buying dog biscuits.

I am writing to you to ask if you have a question of the heart or spirit that you would like some help with. If you do, please send your question to me in care of Barbara Ackerman, 24 Bank Street, Princeton, NJ 08540. I will give you my answer in future issues of *FiP*.

In the meantime I am including here a few of the questions you have already sent in and my answers.

Faithfully,
Angela

Dear Angela,

I appreciated and enjoyed all of your parables very much. May we look forward to more parables in the future?

Sincerely,
Comforted

Dear Comforted,

Why certainly you may look forward to more parables in the future. It's nice to have something to look forward to, isn't it? I think we all feel more zippy when sniffing the air of anticipation. I know for myself I get a tingly feeling in my nose and in the pads of my paws whenever I see my friend Barbara. It is then I know that in two minutes, maybe less, I'll

be romping in God's great backyard, which is a lot more fun than romping in my own.

Faithfully,
Angela

Dear Angela,

Every day, I work elbow to elbow and shoulder to shoulder with other people. We often step on each other's toes both literally and figuratively. Could you please offer us some thoughts on teamwork that might help make our workday more pleasant?

Signed,
Coach

Dear Coach,

You have come to the right place to ask about teamwork. As a member of my home team, I am a reliable team player. All of my team mates need me to need them, and I am good. I can be counted on 100% at all times to lean out for their undivided attention and unconditional love. I can be counted on. I pull my own weight. But I wasn't always this way. Up until two years ago, I didn't give a lick about teamwork. I was a Me-generation dog consumed by only one issue: enough. Was I getting it? Was life offering me enough kibbles and chunks? Enough chest rubs? Two years ago I made my first friend outside the circle of my home team. This friend taught me some valuable lessons about teamwork which I am happy to share with you.

Teamwork is the dance of loving kindness. It is a dance when two beings not only put their two heads together, but their two hearts as well. When your hearts are joined, you each gracefully step with the same paw at the same moment. The two of you are in sync. The dance of loving kindness is fluid and graceful when each of you give up your solitary needs and concerns for the sake of a greater goal that is shared by you both.

Teamwork is the offering of your very best self, and very best gifts to another while they are offering the same to you.

The greatest example of the dance of loving kindness in my own life is the existence of Angela's parables. Barbara and I created the parables together. Neither one of us could have managed to create them on our own. By blending and merging our best selves, we created something bigger than both of us.

The parables are my thoughts and ideas written with Barbara's pen. I spoke in my native tongue: the language of the heart. My friend offered me her silence, her time, and took care to make an accurate translation.

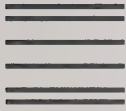
The parables came out randomly and scrambled. Barbara put all of the parables in good, clear order and fixed all the grammar and misspelled words. I offered my friend my loyalty, affection, and my words. She offered me her time, her patience, her silence, and her *Strunk and White*.

We all know it is possible for one solitary soul to make something from nothing. But there is a lot to be said for making something out of nothing in a team. All the while we were creating our something, Barbara and I had each other, so we were never lonely. When we were finished, we still had each other, and parables too! We both got to win by doing it together.

Teamwork is not only about offering your best to another, but doing so gleefully and graciously. Nobody wants to sit on the lap of a grumbling sourpuss. When you are a team player, put out all of your biscuits and all of the little dishes of water so that everyone may share and enjoy everything. Teamwork is *not* about leftovers and who gets the doggie bag.

When you meet your team mate on the street, raise your head up or crouch low so that in your greeting you are both on the same level. Plant a kiss on your team mate's nose and place one paw on their arm. However you choose to do it, acknowledge the input and importance of the other's contribution to your joint effort. However you choose to honor your partner, when you do, you are letting your partner know that something bigger than either one of you now exists in the world because of you both. Let your team mate know that you realize you could not have danced the dance of loving kindness without having held the other in your arms.

Faithfully,
Angela



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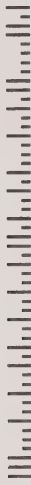
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FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

Why do men and women in 66 countries read *Fellowship in Prayer*?
Our readers tell us:

"This is a highly inspired, ethical publication. Love streams out of it!" "Part of my devotional reading every day." "I find your articles about different beliefs very interesting and informative. They make for better understanding among all persons." "It strengthens my faith in prayer." "The idea of interreligious understanding and cooperation is very dear to me. This is the way to peace." "I love it! It is well written by beautiful, loving people! It is delightful, inspirational, and uplifting. Thank you!"

If you, too, find *Fellowship in Prayer* "a joy and inspiration" to read, won't you take a moment to read and fill in the other side of this page?

Paul Walsh
President
Fellowship in Prayer

From the Hurting Chain to the Freedom Chain

BEATRICE BRUTEAU

My reflections on the mystery of evil have led me (so far) to feel that we do evil and suffer from evil mainly because we believe ourselves to be finite and fragile. Nevertheless, we have an unlimited *drive to be*, to extend ourselves in being in every possible way. When we try to fulfill this drive under the conditions of scarcity in a finite world, we vie with one another, injuring and being injured, and still remain frustrated. There seems to be no way either to fulfill or to protect the finite self. The frustration of our desire for fulfillment and the fear of our being injured by others in their quest for fulfillment hold us in a perpetual state of insecurity. We are always attempting to reduce this insecurity by either aggressive or defensive actions. Many of these actions injure, or increase the sense of insecurity in, others. They react with an aggressive or protective move of their own, which in turn diminishes some other. These actions form a chain, as we recognize in the familiar story of the man who is rebuked by his superior at work and tries to restore his sense of self-esteem by expressing his dominance over his wife; she has to reclaim her pride by scolding the child; the child, having no other outlet, kicks the cat. Each person identified with the self that had been hurt and undertook to “even things up” by demonstrating the power to hurt someone else.



The finite self is in constant need of affirmation. It craves affirmation from others, and when this is not freely forthcoming, forces a kind of substitute for genuine affirmation by altering the other person's life in some way: making the other recognize my reality and respect it—with

Beatrice Bruteau, who has religious background in Vedanta and Roman Catholicism, is a founder of the Schola Contemplationis, a network community for contemplatives of all traditions. A prolific writer, her most recent books are Evolution Toward Divinity and The Psychic Grid. For information on the Schola's newsletter, The Roll, write to 3425 Forest Lane, Pfafftown, NC, 27040.

fear and anger, if need be, but respect it. Thus I fabricate an affirmation of myself. But it is all lies, and it doesn't work. My sense of security in my self-being is actually diminished and I must renew my efforts to bolster it.

I may now start to suffer from a second circle of diminishment. I may recognize the falsity of my attempt to force affirmation from my fellows, and feel all the more impoverished. In a third circle of painful consciousness, I will admit that I have been hurting others, just as they have been hurting me. Depending on the moral code of my culture and the sensitivity of my own perceptions, I will feel, not only not affirmed by others and not affirmed by myself, but not worthy of being affirmed.

In a curious elaboration of the instinct to "even things up" by hurting in turn, we now invent "blame," a kind of abstract and formal hurting which we can do in our minds, and sometimes in our words, even when we cannot express it in our actions. When we turn it upon ourselves it becomes "guilt." We blame ourselves for hurting others. Or so we think. It may be that we are really blaming ourselves for hurting ourselves, hurting ourselves by depriving ourselves of self-esteem: because we have internalized the moral or custom code of our culture, when we violate that code we lose self-esteem. This loss is a hurt. We blame ourselves for causing ourselves this hurt.

That sounds convoluted, but worse is to come. We have to keep this guilt, this self-blame, in place in order to balance the hurt. This balancing is done for the same reason that all other acts of "getting even" are done: in order to regain some vestige of self-esteem. We can have some respect for ourselves if we at least feel guilty. But the feeling of guilt is the feeling of not being worthy of being affirmed. So the final attempt to claim self-esteem is made by asserting that one is not worthy of being affirmed! And we become deeply invested in this attitude because it gives us the minimal feeling of worth and thus enables us, to this least level, to affirm ourselves.

The hurting chain thus operates not only in linking one person's act to another person's act but even within a single person, linking one act to the next reaction to the further reaction and so on. And now the "chain" means something that binds and imprisons and fetters. But the more we struggle against it with our efforts to obtain self-esteem—either within ourselves or based on others' affirmation of us—the tighter it binds us, since each of these efforts involves either hurting others, hurting ourselves, or engaging in falsehood. For we may also put on the

appearances of generosity, humility, even self-sacrifice, in order to gain esteem in a culture which values such qualities—esteem in our own minds, if not in the explicit declaration of others. And when we recognize the falsehood, the only way we know to cope with it is by self-blame again. We are truly trapped.

Is there no way out of the trap? It seems to me that there are two ways out. The first is by allowing someone else to give us freely the affirmation that we crave. This is, after all, where our problem began—or almost where it began, but that will come in a moment. Perceiving ourselves as finite and fragile, fundamentally insecure in being, we inevitably seek sustenance from outside ourselves. We need to be kept in being by others. But who will give us this affirmation? Are we able to give others such affirmation? If not, why not? Because all our available energy is tied up in efforts to protect and advance ourselves in struggling with the Trap.

The person who can give affirmation has to be a person who has some free energy left over, someone who is free of the Trap. Imagine someone who is not concerned about gaining esteem, either from other people or by self-approval, someone for whom that sort of thing is not a problem, not an issue. Such a person either cannot be hurt or can absorb hurts without needing to redress the balance in some way. Such a person will have huge amounts of free energy, feelings of affirmation, to direct to others. The *drive to be* will see to that: the nature of being is to be, to be more and to be in every possible way, thus to communicate being, to radiate being, to affirm being. The person who is free of the need to secure self-being will naturally radiate affirmation of others.

Are there such people? Yes, there are some among us today, there have been others in history—some of them quite famous—and many of them try to communicate to the rest of us how we can become free and loving like them. Some of these lovers of the world have spoken of God, the Ground or Source of Being itself, experienced as a Person, and they have said that even if you do not meet a free and loving person in the flesh in your particular environment, you nevertheless have access to the Great Person, the Supreme Lover. God loves everyone, affirms everyone, unconditionally. This is how they themselves became free and able to love. They realized that God loved them, fully, adequately, more than they could even desire, and therefore they had no further need to concern themselves about obtaining affirmation, either from others or from themselves.

Most of us have heard this story. Why don't we believe it and get free?

We grumble and make objections. If God really loved us so much, why allow all this misery? We overlook the fact that the people who have been freed by believing in God's unconditional love have also suffered, sometimes quite cruelly, without losing their confidence in that love and without losing their freedom. Misery isn't, therefore, a sufficient reason for not believing. It is probably only an excuse, a cover-up for the real reason.

There are, it seems to me, two reasons for our resistance to accepting God's love. People who have been hurt, who feel themselves to be vulnerable and insecure, are very distrustful. They cannot easily believe that someone loves them unconditionally. They fear it's a trick, or that things will change, or that it imposes an enormous obligation of gratitude, or that there is a diminishment in being a recipient. This last points to the second reason: we are uncomfortable with the love being unconditional. We want to deserve it. We would almost rather be *worthy* of love than be *loved*. But there! we are so deeply invested in keeping our minimal self-esteem by declaring ourselves *unworthy* that we cannot permit this! To let God love us in our unworthiness would be to lose the last smidgeon of our self-respect. And to let God love us without any regard to worthiness at all would be to lose any basis for self-regard.

Why do we insist on worthiness? Worthiness is not just goodness, but a *judgment* of a degree of goodness on some scale. It is a way of maintaining control, because it is we who make that judgment. To consent to unconditional love is to give up control, and we can do that only when we give up our fear.

I believe that the vicious circle of our fear has to be broken into from the outside; we cannot give up the fear until someone loves us and we are convinced of the love. Still, we have to accept the love and believe in it. It is in the moment when we consent to believe in it that we are freed. The tensions disappear, the distrust goes; the needs to defend, to assert, to balance hurts—all that evaporates because it is unnecessary. We see that the whole structure was based on a false assumption, the assumption that we were not affirmed and that our being was threatened.

Two wonderful things now happen. First, all the energy that had been tied up in self-defence is now liberated and, powered by the natural radiance of Being, goes out in affirmation of others. Freed ourselves, we are moved to free others. This forms another kind of chain reaction, a freedom chain, spreading from one liberated person to another.

Tom Dunham



The second wonderful thing is that in realizing that our whole defensive posture was based on the false assumption that we were not adequately loved, we also come to realize that our problem had actually started even further back than the belief that our life depended on sustenance from the outside. And this brings us to the second way out of the Trap, of which I spoke earlier. The problem actually began with the belief in being a finite and fragile being. When we experience freedom and the power to love, we realize that our true being, which is this power freely to love unconditionally, has no limits and is absolutely invulnerable. Nothing can prevent us from loving once we are free.

Therefore, some of the great lovers and teachers among us have directed our attention at once to this true self and pointed out the false assumption. You think that you are only this admittedly fragile being of finite description, limited by its needy interactions with its environment, material and personal. But you are much more than that. There is within you a core of being which transcends all these relative descriptions, which is not "outside" anything else, and nothing is "outside" it. It has no needs and no enemies. It dwells in all and therefore cares for all. Let your attention go deeply inward and you will realize this. There are historical and contemporary examples of this way, too, people whose lives testify to the reality of what they say. They are characterized by the same freedom and the same love as those who speak of the unconditional love of God. And from them radiate the links of the same freedom chain. Free and loving themselves, they are able to love others and point out to them the way of freedom.

Such a "chain reaction" is the only way we can reach freedom. Only the freed can free. The great teachers have worked very hard to release us from our fear and to open our eyes to our false assumptions. To the extent that they are successful, great changes appear in the world. But, as in any life process, the real work takes place at the microscopic level. "Each one free one." Link by link, the freedom chain grows, breaking the fetters of fear, and replacing them with the links of love.

These poems, which are currently being set to music, are to be read as a dialogue between God (I, III) and St. Francis of Assisi (II, IV).

Francesco

I

Francesco
Francesco
Francesco
In the morning night
I call you
Child of the flower fields
Where earth and fire
Consume
What are to be a man.

Francesco
Francesco
Francesco
There are a music here
What all cannot discover,
And you
Have heard its air
In all the living breath
Children give
To ancient hair
To blackened fingers
To wizened eyes
To all—

Francesco
Francesco



Frederick Olessi, a Trustee of Fellowship in Prayer, is Vice President for Development and College Relations at Rider College in Lawrenceville, NJ. A writer, producer, playwright and poet, he has won numerous awards at the Cannes Film Festival, the London Film Festival, the Badalona Film Festival, and the Golden Knight Film Festival in Malta. His most recently performed plays are Medea and Masada.

Francesco
Sing love
To all great creatures,
Love
What do transcend
 envelop
 and
 surround,
Love
Love
Love

II

I run
You sun
And sing
You moon
And
Breathe great joy
On these
Who do in nature live.

Oh bread
Oh earth
Oh water,
Oh all what do great homage
You
Who have us made
I run
I sing
I breathe.

Oh were I have
Eternal life
Oh were I one
The universe
Then all would be
I love

III

Francesco
 Francesco
 Francesco
 In pain
 Are we delivered
 In pain
 Do we transpire,
 But here
 In moments of great splendor
 Do all
 The color
 Live—
 Wash there
 Your fellow creatures
 And show their dust
 The living sun
 Are seeds
 The earth are make
 Immortal.
 Francesco
 Francesco
 Son
 Of all the father's joy
 Be mother to that pulse I am
 In love
 For love
 And love—

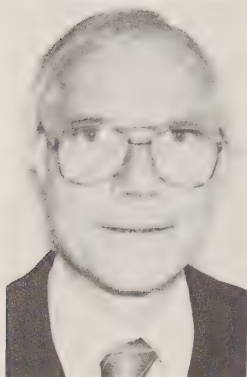
IV

Oh God
 I hear you in the flower's blood,
 Near there
 Where are the birds inbathe—
 My God
 I know you in the winter night
 Where snow and ice deliver—
 Oh God
 My God
 Would men so know
 The love that here create
 This channel
 In an inner sea
 What all what pass
 Are love.
 I am
 I will
 I do,
 I worship in the morning night
 Your voice
 What do so lever
 All
 The joy we are—
Frederick Olessi

Should We Pray for Conversions?

WALT MELFI

"There is a valid ministry of praying that all be converted to the deep awareness of the compassionate, protecting nurturing presence of God," this author writes. Instead of praying for others to be converted to our own tradition, we should pray for their growth in love and enhanced awareness of our oneness in God.



In the June '89 issue of *Fellowship in Prayer*, Cynthia F. Barnum tells the moving story of her conversion from being "white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant" to being an Orthodox Jew. Barnum shares her story with her friend, Deborah, who is also converting to Judaism. To Deborah she writes, "In my idealistic way, I sometimes wish I could wave a magic wand and make everyone who hated anyone *become* that person, race or person, just to see how ugly and poisonous hatred is, and how it robs them, the haters, of life. Your choice to convert

is a conscious decision *not* to hate, but to love, and to embrace others, not just Jews, although we are duty-bound to show 'God is the God of all the world, not just Jewry.' . . ."

Christians believe that Jesus Christ challenges all to "be converted": "Reform your lives," he says, "for the kingdom of Heaven is close at hand." Jesus proclaims for all the golden rule: "So always treat others as you would like them to treat you; that is the Law and the Prophets."

There is a valid ministry of praying that all be converted to the deep awareness of the compassionate, protecting, nurturing presence of God. Our prayer for the conversion of others should be a plea for them to receive such a change of attitude toward people that they exclude no one from their acting justly and loving tenderly.

It takes humility of heart and a gentle spirit to allow all others the freedom to respond in their unique way to their personal sense of God intervening in their lives. It is not necessary nor reasonable for every person on the globe to live out their "conversion" in the very same belief

Walt Melfi, who lives in Charleston, SC, writes that he and his wife spend much of their time promoting small prayer groups for justice seeking, peace making and community building.

Tom Dunham



system, be it Judaism, Catholicism, Protestantism, Muslim, Hinduism or Buddhism.

It would truly be a manifestation of God's entry into human history, if in every place people reformed their lives from hating to loving others, treating others as they would like others to treat them and living in harmony with the ecological rhythms of the earth. That is the conversion we should all be praying for.

Such a conversion prayer ought not insinuate that our own religious tradition does not merit our personal affirmation and development. Far from it. The diversity of religious traditions magnifies the mystery of our basic oneness in God. Enhanced, too, is the marvel of the wholeness of truth revealed in a variety of authentic human experiences.

Nor should our prayer for conversions imply that our belief system, sacred rite, church, synagogue, mosque or temple *is* the kingdom of God. At best, a sacred rite or religious structure can only announce, introduce and threshold the presence of God. Conscious of their oneness with God, the whole human family and all creation, believers show forth in their just decisions and loving relationships God's personal influence and direction. The kingdom's incoming is God's will being done.

So do not pray that Jews, Christians or Muslims be converted from their own tradition to any of the other traditions. Rather, pray that all people, religious and non-religious, be continually converted to God who is consistent in offering to all mercy and integrity.

Learn to appreciate each other's religio-cultural expressions of their desire to be more in harmony with God, the human family and earth's ecosystems. Astonishing variety set within intricate connections is the mark of God's oneness and creativity. All things working together for the good of those who love God is the sign of God's power and wisdom.

In God it is all connected; we are all connected. When we offend others, God takes offense. What we do to others, we do to ourselves. When we reduce our part of the earth to barren deserts and toxic waste dumps, we threaten the wellbeing of people everywhere.

Prayers for conversions should genuinely promote for the whole human family closer unity with God, each other and mother earth. Conversion prayers are counter-productive, perhaps even sacrilegious, when they pit one authentic religious tradition against another, one's experience of God against others' experience of God, one people's building the earth against other peoples' building the earth.

An Immediate Answer to Prayer

Often the immediate answer to prayers is a transforming experience. My experience was in a lifelong association with an older person of self-pitying, fearful, negative, demanding and complaining nature—age 91—who even spoke over the years of suicide and rejected the application of any known spiritual values. I found myself poisoned by my own reaction of impatience and irritation. For no matter how much was done or given, nothing ever changed.

One night recently, however, I decided to pray over it. First I prayed that my negative attitude be effaced, and second I prayed that the other person express cheerfulness and gratitude.

Believe it or not the following day both of us were transformed in precisely the way I had asked. I especially had an inner peace and detached compassion that has endured.

Perhaps in order to pray well we have to ask well—ask for a well-rounded solution.

Not So Much the Medium as the Message

JEAN ADAMS

It was four years ago—my 49th birthday—but I remember the experience as though it happened yesterday.

I was sitting on the sofa at home, reviewing my life (past) and my goals (future), when something happened to bring my focus right into the present to show me reality.

It seemed that everyone at the center where I taught yoga and meditation was “into” crystals. So I had decided my next step would be to acquire one and see what all the excitement was about. There was a shop I would go to the next day; I would find many to choose from.

Suddenly my gaze fell on a basket where I had a collection of favorite rocks—packed and unpacked each time we had moved—four times in the past fifteen years. I found myself moving as though in a trance: standing up, walking to the basket, reaching out my arm, my hand picking up—a crystal! A lovely smokey-tipped quartz crystal, clear and beautiful. I was stunned. What was happening? Where had it come from?

I immediately sat in meditation, my mind and heart open for “an explanation.” My eyes were closed, and I saw written as though in skywriting, the words:

EVERYTHING YOU NEED OR WANT—OR THINK YOU NEED
OR WANT—YOU ALREADY HAVE.

The crystal had been there all the time, given to me by a geology professor returning from a “dig” in Baraboo, Wisconsin. I had seen it as just one of the pretty rocks. It now held a message which I have never—not once—forgotten, and the truth of which is constantly being affirmed in everything I see.

A yoga and meditation teacher for nearly twenty years, Jean Adams makes her home in the Florida Keys. She attributes much of her spiritual development to A Course in Miracles.



Jean Adams playing her flute for two dolphins

A Perspective on the Rainbow

MANUS MONROE

"Blessed art Thou, O, Lord of the universe, who generates creation." The author uses this Old Testament prayer to remind us that creation is ongoing, and God calls all women and men to sanctify and care for it.



The rainbow is perceived by some merely as water drops diffracting visible light. Others recall the rainbow as part of God's covenant not to destroy Earth with water; a few talk of a pot of gold. The rainbow may also be seen as God's symbol that we are responsible for the continuation of the multitude of different species of animals on Earth. This latter concept is divided into two parts: inheriting responsibilities for animals and how the rainbow is God's reminder of our guardianship.

Our inheritance of responsibilities for animals began when the Lord said to Noah, *"b'yadcha nitunim"* (in your hand are given). In essence, the fate of each species of animal was now to be determined by humans. We, not God, must maintain the balance between our needs and those of animals. Initially, planetary guidelines were given to Adam and Eve. Recall that the Lord said to them, *"umilu et-ha ertez v' kivshuha* (replenish the earth and subdue it). The Hebrew word *kivshuha* (subdue) not only means to destroy the force of, but to captivate by charm. Of these two types of meanings for subdue, surely God meant and still means the latter. If the former meaning was meant, then the text would have used the term *v'hashmid* (destruction). Recall that after Adam and Eve ate from the tree of knowledge, the Lord called out to Adam and said *"v'yomer lo ahyekkah?"* (Where are you?) When we view this question not of Adam's physical location but one of asking how does the newly aware Adam perceive his position in God's universe, then we hear the call to stewardship.

Manus Monroe is a chemistry professor at the College of Marin, in Kentfield, CA. With his wife and three other people, he created the Sonoma County Synagogue Center in Rohnert Park, CA.



Regretfully, we as the descendants of Adam and Eve have forgotten the duties of being the guardian. God, being all-knowing, surely understands the forgetful nature of humans and knows that we need reminders. Could a primary aspect of the rainbow's meaning be the stewardship reminder? The rainbow is a sign of the first covenant between God and all living creatures. Is that covenant just limited to God's responsibilities or does it also include reciprocal human ones? Recalling that Judaism teaches the fundamental principle that humans have an interacting relationship with God, we become obliged to acknowledge our responsibilities. Since God spoke to Noah, we can readily accept that all of the spoken statement from Genesis 8:15 to 9:17 are inclusive in that contract. Chronologically, the contract encompasses the following: *having birds, animals and creeping things teem on Earth* instructs humans to spread over the land and take responsibility for animal life* allows hu-

mans to eat green herbage and kosher animals *allows humans to execute murderers *have humans teem on the Earth* establish and ratify this covenant and, finally, *use the rainbow as a sign of the covenant. Notice that animals and humans are to *sharatz* (teem) on the planet, and this implies that we, as the steward, are neither to grow so large in population nor so powerful as to either greatly reduce or extinguish animal life.

When we see a rainbow we should remind ourselves and inspire our children to sanctify and protect life's intricate matrix, the intertwined environment that keeps us all alive. *Baruch ata Adonai Eloheyne Melech haolam osey ma'aasey bereshit*. Blessed art Thou, Lord of the universe, who generates creation.

Being Prayer

SR. MIRIAM



I've found it helpful to think of prayer as someone we are rather than something we do.

But let's be precise about what this doesn't mean. It doesn't mean we shouldn't clear some space in the day for a special sort of attention to God; or that because we are alive we are automatically praying. It means rather something like this:

Say we've been taught or have discovered a helpful method of prayer. It works. We keep going back to it because it seems to be making a constructive difference in our daily life. Thoughts and attitudes seem to be changing, gradually but practically. Tensions loosen up. People start to notice we're not quite so scratchy or moody or demanding.

Then something goes terribly wrong. It might be a missed promotion, a child with drug problems, a co-worker with whom there seems no way to work out a peaceful relationship. Maybe a bad marriage gets worse, or someone on whom we're desperately dependent either dies or moves away. Perhaps we're buckling under the weight of a few dozen common, minor irritations; or it's just that the newness of our prayer experience has quietly eroded when we weren't looking.

Prayer, which had been a refuge, a source of resiliency and hope, begins to feel like the rest of life, and the rest of life is currently not much fun. Where did that glorious new outlook wander off to? Where is the prayer and how can we get it back? Trying to stick with it, we can find to our horror that we don't even seem to want the God we're praying to, let alone the prayer itself. Prayer has become a period of time in which we sit with our backs against a brick wall. We've paced our way around it and counted every brick. There is no gate. Perhaps a garden lies inside, but we can't get there, and are left with a brick-count and sore feet. Angry, discouraged, anxious, we're tempted to forget the whole business.

Sr. Miriam is a Trappistine nun of Mt. St. Mary's Abbey in Wrentham, MA. Among her books are The Laughter of God, The Listening God, and Acceptance, Passage into Hope.



But wait. If prayer is something we *do*, an accomplishment, a task, a skill to be exercised, we are in a bad way. But *is* prayer the achievement of a goal, like winning a track event or painting a portrait or frosting a cake?

If the prayer is the person we are, then the emotional effects of disagreeable events are going to be part of prayer. Why not? They're part of us.

For one thing, we're all human, and the whole person prays. We're all flawed in some way, so that normal emotional reactions tend to get out of hand. Prayer is not a compartment of life from which all upset and emotion have to be drained. It's not an exhibit in a museum but a lived-in house. We can, we must expose our hurts and grumbles to a God

whose deep personal love for us extends into every corner and attic and sub-cellar of our personality.

For another thing, these upsets are telling us something about ourselves, and although they aren't telling God anything he doesn't already know, they are telling us of wounds we need to recognize in order to surrender them to God's healing love. The person is never a finished product, and God enlists our efforts in the process of growth. God respects us; God wants us to know (at least to some extent) what's going on, so that we can embrace his plans for us with an active and constructive acceptance.

Prayer is not a compartment of life from which all upset and emotion have to be drained. It's not an exhibit in a museum but a lived-in house. We can, we must expose our hurts and grumbles to a God whose deep personal love for us extends into every corner and attic and sub-cellar of our personality.

But thirdly and most important, prayer is the willingness to enter more deeply into the mystery of God, into who he is himself and who he is as savior. In this mystery lies our own most profound identity. *Everything* about us cannot be known, figured out, processed, and planned. Snarls and stoppages are a necessary part of prayer because the person who is praying is being drawn into a world which transcends and penetrates far beneath the normal assumptions about life, God, and the self. We're entitled to confusion, because we are, in our intimate communion with God, so much more than we can understand.

Prayer is patience with being human; a share in God's patience with our limitations, but patience also with the slow unfolding of our unlimited destiny. Faith, hope, and love are not rules of etiquette in some ideal world where we must walk poised, starched and uncreased. They are gifts, powers we can use as ordinary, rumpled human beings who need time and a degree of trouble to become the selves God has in mind.

People have their ups and downs; so does prayer. Today's prayer is not yesterday's, and tomorrow's can't be forecast. It might be very pleasant. Human life is not a carton of homogenized milk, and neither is prayer. It grows, it changes. It fits today because it is (on our side) the expression of today's person, and (on God's side) the gift of what that person needs in order to grow into tomorrow.

ORIGINAL GOODNESS: STRATEGIES FOR UNCOVERING YOUR
HIDDEN SPIRITUAL RESOURCES

by Eknath Easwaran, Nilgiri Press, Petaluma, CA, 1989, 240 pages, paperback \$12, hardcover \$22.

This is the best book yet from the prolific founder of the Blue Mountain Center of Meditation in Berkeley, CA. While Easwaran relies heavily on the Christian mystics of the West, his learning in Eastern wisdom shines on every page as he makes a persuasive case that compassion, hope, meaning, and freedom from fear reside in every human heart. No one need struggle to achieve these aspects of "original goodness," he writes. One must simply remove the inner obstacles to seeing what we already have. This is an excellent source for lay readers and clergy looking for a way of meditation that incorporates the spiritual traditions and teachings of the West.

THE COMPASSIONATE PRESENCE, MEETING AND GREETING A
LOVE THAT WILL NOT END

by Stephen Schwartz, Riverrun Press, Piermont, NY, 1988, 324 pages, paperback, \$12.

"We need to discover as spiritual seekers how our strength, our worthiness, and our dignity come from an inward connection to infinite Love and not from anything on this earth." These words from the introduction to Stephen Schwartz' latest book hold the secret of his mystical, therapeutic spirituality. He shows how the journey to and in God takes place in the heart, where an endless stream of feelings, painful and pleasurable, flow like a river grounded in Divine Love. Schwartz believes absolutely that whoever sits in meditation with these feelings, accepting their flow and acknowledging their holy Source, will experience God and know the reason for human life.

I am practicing Peace of Mind by sending you this confession. In 1976 my ex-wife and I started an urban ministry in Denver, CO, called The Shalom Community. We left that retreat center after two years, but the Community still continues, more as a halfway house for persons with mental illness. The *FiP* journal was received there and has followed me to Sarasota. I also confess that the different issues of *FiP* came and went without too much notice by me, until for some reason I read the August, 1989 issue. I found myself reading it with considerable ardor—perhaps because of the article by Dr. William Haynes, Jr., devoted to the physician's spiritual journey. It sounds so similar to my own that I would like to write to Dr. Haynes.

I wish now to start paying for my own subscription and for one for the Shalom Community. Hence the enclosed check. Thank you for persisting to send *FiP* to me over the years. Your journal is very inspirational!

Thomas C. Washburn, M.D.; Sarasota, FLA

I have read *FiP* for several years now, and I love it. For me, it is the *best* publication available because I am always looking for universality in religious matters. Thanks!

Kirsten Moller; Arlington, VA

I am the Director of the Jean Donovan Catholic Worker House in St. Cloud, Minnesota. I love your little magazine and read it from cover to cover the day it arrives. I awaken at 4:30 a.m. and before arising prepare for the day with apples, burning incense and candles. I write in my journal to celebrate life with Matthew Fox, the birds and the sunrise. Then I pray while pedalling an exercise bicycle to the tune of an affirmations tape that says we are all pillars of strength. That way I can live and create anew all my relationships. I am enclosing a meditation I recently wrote:

The spring that brims and flows.
It's Source I do not know.
And yet from this I know all sources come.
Although by night.
I know that no created thing could be so fair.
Both earth and heaven drink from there.

Please send your comments to The Editor, Fellowship in Prayer, 291 Witherspoon Street, Princeton, NJ 08542.

Although by night.
 The current welling from this fountain's Source,
 I know to be as mighty as it's force.
 Although by night.

Helen Gaebe; St. Cloud, MN

Your October issue was a jewel. But then I feel that way each time I read *FiP*.

Fanchette Stewart; Coldwater, MI

I picked up a recent copy of *FiP* in the office. We discussed the magazine and immediately I knew that I wanted to become a part of your fellowship. So I am requesting a subscription.

I am a Born-again Christian and God has opened the door for me to teach a class at a Christian drug and alcohol center. I believe that we need to keep an open mind to all beliefs. We need first to educate ourselves in order to understand others instead of judging them simply because their beliefs are different from ours. I am subscribing to *FiP* in order to learn more about the beliefs and different types of worship that your articles describe. Thank you very much.

Luis Vega; Bronx, NY

I particularly appreciated your October issue. So many things move me in Spirit and mind. I love some of the quotes in your Editor's Intro, e.g., "The secret to solving all the problems in the world is loving children." Ahhh, how beautiful! And that paragraph you excerpted from *The Sun My Heart* is touching. In addition, the article by Matthew Fox on Meister Eckhart is illuminating . . . "Love can only be where there is equality." Something I am still trying to learn . . . equality means with, not over. How to handle supervising a staff working on this planet earth and not make the project more important than the person is the rub. I also enjoyed the blatant honesty of Octavio Feliciano's article, and suggest that his last line, "Until I become enlightened" ain't that far away. Perhaps he might just look in the bottom of his cup when emptied of cafe con leche. Thank you for your wonderful work!

Rick Edelstein; Los Angeles, CA

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